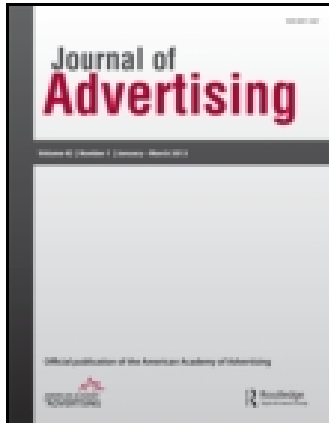


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### AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLICITY, ADVERTISING, AND PREVIOUS BRAND ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE

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# AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLICITY, ADVERTISING, AND PREVIOUS BRAND ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE

Claire Stammerjohan, Charles M. Wood, Yuhmiin Chang, and Esther Thorson

**ABSTRACT:** Marketing practitioners and advertising firms have increasingly embraced an integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach to their promotional efforts in order to achieve direct effects of the individual communication tool used, as well as an additional “synergistic” effect from the combination of communications tools used. The present study is designed to fill a gap in the marketing literature by using a controlled experimental design to assess and compare the individual and combined influences of two IMC tools—publicity and advertising—on attitude toward the ad ( $A_{ad}$ ) and attitude toward the brand ( $A_b$ ). The study also looks for synergies from the use of multiple media (radio and print). Findings show that the combined effects of these IMC tools on  $A_{ad}$  and  $A_b$  are not identical, and that there are complex interactions between media, brand familiarity, and the valence of news stories.

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) has been described as a natural and “inevitable” result of progress in promotional tools and convergence in media (Schultz 1996). Over the past decade, advertising agencies have adopted the IMC approach as both a sound practice and a source of added revenue. In addition, brand managers instinctively like the idea of a unified brand image and getting more “bang” for their buck (Cook 1997; Novelli 1989; Lemon and Nowlis 2002). The cumulative impact and interplay of different communication tools (i.e., “synergy”) is not well understood, however. This is surprising given the widespread acceptance of the practice and promises of the IMC approach. Prior research has examined synergies resulting from the use of multiple media in a campaign (e.g., Bhargava and Donthu 1999; Chang and Thorson 2004; Naik and Raman 2003), but few studies have empirically examined the interplay of advertising, sales promotion, publicity, direct marketing, and personal selling to see whether using multiple promotional tools results in synergy—a positive response to a campaign that is greater than the sum of separate expected responses based on use of

each communication tool. Representing an early, exploratory contribution to this stream, the research reported here examines how publicity for a firm (both positive and negative) affects consumer response to a company’s advertising messages.

Under the domain of public relations, publicity is recognized as an efficient, credible means of communication. Firms do not have complete control over the type of publicity that consumers see, however, and publicity about a company can be negative. For example, Ford, Firestone, and Enron have faced a worldwide airing of negative publicity regarding their products and practices. Unfortunately for Firestone, the negative publicity about some of its tires coincided with its launch of a multimillion-dollar ad campaign celebrating “100 years of reliability.” Needless to say, in the face of the negative stories about its products, Firestone scrapped the ad campaign. It has been proposed that Firestone believed that the campaign might only remind consumers about the negative stories that were prominent in papers worldwide, or worse yet, the ads might imply that the company was ignoring the concerns about the safety of its products. Conversely, it is possible that positive publicity about a company or its products may improve consumer response to the company’s advertising. Thus, the effects of advertising under conditions of both good and bad publicity are of interest.

In addition, previous brand attitudes and brand familiarity (brand knowledge) are known to interact with company/

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brand messages. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to study the interaction of communication from company sources (i.e., advertising) with communication from noncompany sources (i.e., positive and negative news stories, publicity), while considering the influence of previous brand attitudes and knowledge.

### THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THE "SYNERGY" EFFECT

One of the many reasons behind the value of IMC is that using multiple communication tools can be mutually reinforcing, or "synergistic" (e.g., Carlson et al. 1996; Cook 1996, 1997; Duncan and Everett 1993; Eagle et al. 1999; Hutton 1996; Naik and Raman 2003; Nowak and Phelps 1994; Pickton and Hartley 1998; Reid 2003; Schultz 1996; Schultz and Kitchen 1997; Stewart 1996). Furthermore, using multiple communication tools is expected to be efficient, rather than extravagant or redundant. This is expected to be true of promotional tools (such as when advertising is combined with publicity) as well as media tools (such as when radio is combined with print media).

Researchers are beginning to examine consumer processing of an IMC campaign from a more holistic perspective, considering the complex of ongoing mental processes and subconscious response where multiple stimuli and existing brand knowledge are handled simultaneously in a "moment-to-moment reality" (Grunert 1996; Pilotta et al. 2004; Weilbacher 2003, p. 232; Zaltman 2003). Certainly, this developing stream of research is promising, and the present study contributes to our understanding of these issues by examining the interaction of two IMC tools using a sequential arrangement of presentation modalities, as would often (but certainly not always) be the case in a multiple-media, multiple-tool IMC campaign. Just as early research in advertising began with controlled experiments and developed into more complex studies of media multitasking, we believe that the present study will help lay the groundwork for future research investigating the effects of IMC tools from this emerging perspective.

There are several theoretical explanations for why synergies may be expected, including encoding variability theory, repetition-variation theory, and the principles of selective attention and source credibility. Each of these will be discussed in turn. Positivity and brand familiarity effects will also be discussed.

#### Encoding Variability Theory

Encoding variability theory (Tavassoli 1998) suggests that when a consumer receives the same message from a variety of media, the message will be encoded into his or her memory

in a more complex fashion than if only one medium were used, resulting in a stronger, clearer, more accessible information network in the brain. This enhances the likelihood that the information will be recalled accurately. Varying the modality of a presentation is also likely to improve the perceptions of the aesthetic value of a promotional campaign, a cosmetic (precognitive) characteristic that should positively influence attitude toward the ad, and ultimately attitude toward the brand (Petty and Caccioppo 1981).

Two recent articles in the marketing literature lend support to this perspective. Tavassoli (1998) cites brain research in explaining what happens when consumers are exposed to verbal messages via auditory and/or visual signals. Auditory and visual signals use different channels in the brain, thereby accessing different resources. Allocating more resources to encoding should produce clearer, stronger encoding and a larger network of accessible information. Tavassoli (1998) concluded that the advantage of bimodal presentation formats is "sensory perceptual." Precognitive cues such as colors, shapes, pitch, or rhythm assisted memory. Tavassoli (1998) also concluded that the advantage of the bimodal format applied mostly to spoken words—auditory signals such as radio messages. In other words, adding visual effects helped improve memory for verbal information more than adding audio (verbal information) helped memory for visual information (e.g., shape, color).

This effect extends to item-specific elaboration as well as encoding. From a firm's perspective, elaboration might mean the consumer thinking about what it would be like to own or use the item, or whether the item was worth the price. Unnava (1996) found evidence supporting the idea that consumer-generated imagery (audio or visual) and comprehension of ad copy require the same resources, resulting in less recall of the ad if the presentation modality of the ad was the same as the modality of the ad-produced imagery. In other words, the ad is recalled better if the presentation of the ad was auditory (verbal, talking about the product) and the consumer visualized the ad concepts (saw themselves using a product) or vice versa, rather than if both ad presentation (picture) and consumer elaboration were visual.

With the exception of a few articles (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995, and those cited above), the above discussion is generally applied to justification for using an audio-visual presentation such as television, versus print, where demands for processing verbal information via visual channels might reduce the effectiveness of pictorial components of the advertisements or vice versa. In the case of television, the auditory and visual components of the presentation are used concurrently, and it is not clear whether this concurrence in time is necessary for the effect. If the issue is resource scarcity, then concurrence may be a critical issue. If the advantage is multiple encodings and an expanded network, concurrence may

be an advantage. Consumers encounter and process media both sequentially and in a polychromic way.

Presentation modality may also be considered a cosmetic cue. Hence the expression, "The medium *is* the message." Precognitive or cosmetic cues have been shown to affect attitudes rather than beliefs (e.g., Gorn et al. 1997; Petty and Cacioppo 1981). Because attitudes are thought to be summaries of memory-based judgments (Tavassoli and Lee 2003), using multiple media should improve attitude toward the ad, and thus will ultimately influence attitude toward the brand.

### Repetition-Variation Theory

One of the promises of IMC is that all of a company's communication will be unified, or will have "one voice." In considering the "one voice" dimension of IMC, we are looking at the effects of variation in media (information modality) on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. Gibson (1996) reports that despite research showing the substantial effects that a single viewing of an advertisement can have, it is epigrammatic that advertising results are better with repetition. Advertisers have studied the effects of repetition such as "wear in and wear out" (e.g., Berlyne 1970; Pechmann and Stewart 1989), and more recently, the effects of repetition and variation (Sawyer 1981; Schumann, Petty, and Clemons 1990). Schumann, Petty, and Clemons (1990) found that varying peripheral cues had greater impact on attitudes under low-motivation conditions, but different persuasive messages were more influential in a high-motivation condition. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1981) was used to explain the difference. Essentially, the ELM posits that distinct persuasive routes exist, including a direct or central, high-motivation route and a peripheral, low-motivation route. The high-motivation route processes the claims of advertisers, whereas the low-motivation route is affected at a precognitive level by peripheral cues such as spokesperson, background, or medium. As noted earlier, other researchers (e.g., Zaltman 1997, 2003; Zinkhan and Braunsberger 2004) have challenged these models of information acquisition, arguing for a more complex model that may even more specifically include nonverbal cues as information.

Hagtvedt et al. (1994) found that cosmetic variation cues can lead to equal positive affect, persistence in memory, and confidence in the attitude, but substantive variation develops attitudes that are more resistant to change. In other words, substantive variation and cosmetic variation operate through different mechanisms and differentially affect the strength of consumer attitudes. These results are consistent with and extend the results of Schumann, Petty, and Clemons (1990).

The ideas of repetition and variety also have a place in aesthetics. Since liking of an ad has been found to play a major role in overall attitude toward the brand, aesthetics must also

play a role in that attitude. The use of unity and variety to achieve aesthetic purposes is well documented in both art literature and product-design literature (e.g., Bloch 1995; Ocvirk et al. 1994; Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998). Often combined into the concept of harmony, repetition and variety of promotional tools can combine to form a pleasing whole—in this case, a positive attitude toward the ad and positive attitude toward the brand.

### Selective Attention

Kahneman (1973) demonstrated that among a set of stimuli, individuals give the most attention to those that are both complex and familiar, or both simple and novel. They give less attention to stimuli that are both complex and novel or both familiar and simple. Repeating a theme throughout an IMC campaign increases familiarity, and using multiple tools to embody the theme in different ways increases complexity. The net result is the promise of IMC campaigns to break through media clutter and gain more attention from customers. Attention acts as a mediator for the effect of communication (MacKenzie 1985); we therefore expect attention to be greater for synergistic combinations (e.g., a print news story and a radio ad), resulting in improved attitude toward the ad and the brand.

In sum, there are several reasons to expect a multiple-communication tool, multiple-media campaign to have a more positive effect than any single-tool, single-medium campaign. First, encoding variability suggests that multiple media can activate a larger memory network and reduce encoding problems due to the increased resources made available through the use of multiple channels. Second, repetition and variety theory suggests that precognitive and/or cosmetic cues are expected to aid encoding and improve attitudes toward multiple exposures and, therefore, receptiveness. Finally, selective attention suggests that the use of repetition and variety should result in increased attention, resulting in more elaboration and improved attitude toward the ad and the brand.

### Source Credibility

One of the strengths of a public relations effort in a marketing campaign is its ability to generate positive publicity for a brand, product, or company in such places as broadcast media, newspapers, and trade publications. Because publicity is communication from a noncompany source, it has more credibility with consumers than does advertising (Lindquist and Sirgy 2003). Publicity is also likely to influence consumers' attitudes toward ads and brands because consumers use the most credible information available to assess the trustworthiness of other information in the marketplace.

Source credibility also comes into play when consumers



tap their own knowledge and past experience with a brand to evaluate advertising and advertising claims for the brand. Thus, prior knowledge about a product category and/or brand are expected to influence ad processing (Park and Lessig 1977). Product or brand knowledge is expected to moderate the effects of attitude toward the ad on attitude toward the brand. That is, the consumer will be less affected by new information if he or she is already familiar with the brand.

### Other Effects: Positivity and Brand Familiarity

The "Pollyanna Principle" states that in the human psyche, "pleasant predominates" (Matlan and Stang 1978, p. 3). People are quicker to ascribe goodness than badness and are quicker to recognize pleasant stimuli than threatening stimuli. There are several potential explanations for this. Positivity is more reinforcing than negativity. There are significant sociological reasons to maintain a positive front, and these attitudes and behaviors may become habit (Matlan and Stang 1978; see also Kennedy, Mather, and Carstensen 2004). Psychoanalytical as well as evolutionary perspectives provide theoretical bases for emphasizing the positive. In addition, an information-processing perspective states that pleasant stimuli are processed more thoroughly than unpleasant stimuli, due to both perception and processing (Matlan and Stang 1978; see also McGuire and McGuire 1992). Indeed, information processing relies on a model in which perception is at least partially conditioned by cognitive processing. Matlan and Stang (1978) provide an overview of more than a thousand studies supporting a positivity bias in the perceptive stages of cognition. Positivity selection also extends to memory creation and to retrieval. Finally, the combination of all these positivity effects leads us to believe that positive information about a product from a credible source will affect information processing, which in turn affects attitudes toward the product and ads featuring the product.

Several authors have examined the effects of brand familiarity on response to stimuli (e.g., Anand and Sternthal 1990; Berlyne 1970; Campbell and Keller 2003; Park and Lessig 1977), finding that high familiarity actually limits advertising effectiveness. Park and Lessig (1977) proposed that low product familiarity reduces the amount of promotional information that will be processed, moderate familiarity allows for the broadest range of product information to be processed (including the use of affect), and high familiarity reduces the amount of information processed. They also describe how, in the case of high brand familiarity, it is less important to provide product information, since very little will be used, and more important to provide an interesting stimulus to avoid boredom. This is also consistent with the theories discussed above and the arguments and findings of Campbell and Keller (2003).

Two other studies found that while direct affect transfer (attitude toward the ad to attitude toward the brand) occurred for unfamiliar brands, the effects were reduced for familiar brands (Machleit and Wilson 1988; Smith, Feinberg, and Burns 1998). Given the above findings and general criticism regarding external validity about copy test studies, we organize and test our hypotheses on both a familiar brand, American Express (AMEX), and a less familiar brand, Oreck.

American Express Credit Cards (AMEX) and Oreck Vacuum Cleaners were chosen because they represent product categories that are relevant to students. As young adults living away from home for the first time, students may be expected to take on adult responsibilities such as cleaning their living space and managing money for the first time. This fact is supported by an analysis of product use and ownership data conducted using Choices 3 software that taps secondary data from the Simmons Study of Media and Markets 2001. Reports from these analyses revealed that the indexes calculated for ownership and usage of vacuum cleaners among 18-, 19-, 20-, and 21-year-olds is comparable, and at times exceeds, the indexes in all other age groups. (Where an index of 100 is the average, the indexes for "purchased a vacuum cleaner in the past 12 months" among 18-, 19-, 20-, and 21-year-olds are 121, 170, 135, and 66, respectively. For ages 22–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, and 65+, the indexes are 132, 96, 100, 98, 101, and 110.) Student use of credit cards is a well-documented reality, and students are regular targets of direct-mail campaigns for signing up for additional cards. Thus, both of the products chosen were believed to be of sufficient interest to students. Another advantage of using products from these two firms was the availability of existing positive auditory and visual stimuli. American Express is familiar because it targets many advertisements for its credit cards to college students, while Oreck fit the role of a less familiar brand, despite the product relevance for students.

### HYPOTHESES

Encoding variability and repetition/variety theory predict positive, general effects of using multiple communication tools. Therefore, we expect there to be positive effects on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand from the combination of publicity and advertising. In our first test of this proposition, the effects of radio and print ads were combined. The research question is whether consumer attitudinal responses toward the ad or brand are affected by the nature of publicity—a second, complementary, communication tool.

In this experiment, the publicity for both brands was in the form of print news stories, and there was a positive and a negative news story for each brand. Having greater source credibility than the advertising, information from the news stories was expected to be incorporated into respondents'

thoughts and attitudes before the exposure to advertising. As expressed in H1a, we expect that this should lead to the positive news story group having more positive attitude toward the ad and brand than a control group that did not see a positive news story. Logically, the reverse should be true of the negative group. Since negative publicity has higher source credibility than the advertising it is paired with, it might be expected that negative publicity should result in a significantly lower rating than that of the control group. However, another factor—positivity—will also influence the results.

Positivity theory predicts that pleasant (positive) experiences and stimuli will be more perceived and internalized than unpleasant stimuli (Matlan and Stang 1978). In this experiment, all the advertising was positive. It made no threats, and used no scare tactics. In the case of AMEX, the background sounds of birds chirping for the radio ad, and a pleasant-looking male model for the print ad were expected to provide pleasant peripheral cues for those ads. In the case of Oreck, the enthusiasm of the speaker in the radio ad and the unthreatening photo of the CEO in the print ad were expected to have similar results. For both brands, the amount of product information was relatively limited. In light of and in combination with positivity bias, the combination of positive publicity and positive advertising logically predicts a positive response in attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand.

In contrast, at this early stage of our research program, we cannot predict the sum effect of positive advertising, negative publicity, and positivity bias. Therefore, we make no predictions or hypotheses about the combined effects (synergies) of negative publicity and advertising. Rather, attitudes toward the ad and attitudes toward the brand in the negative publicity groups are deemed exploratory and are discussed for any inductive value they may have.

Before attempting to test for the synergistic effects described above, which are expected to be peripheral because they are cosmetic and precognitive in nature compared with the ad message (Petty and Cacioppo 1981), we subdivided each hypothesis into expectations for a familiar and an unfamiliar brand. Brand familiarity should moderate the effect of publicity or advertising, resulting in a significant result for the unfamiliar brand, and less or no result for the familiar brand. This is because people have already formed opinions about the familiar brands, and are more influenced by previous opinions than by new information (Hawkins, Hoch, and Meyers-Levy 2001; Park and Lessig 1977; Weilbacher 2003). Thus, consumers are not disposed to change their opinions based on a single news story or advertisement. Clearly, this influential variable has the power to confound the results of our experiment. Therefore, H1 is divided into two subhypotheses to account for the differential effects of IMC on familiar and unfamiliar brands.

*H1a: For a familiar brand, there will be no difference in attitude toward the ad or attitude toward the brand between respondents viewing positive news stories and the control group.*

*H1b: For an unfamiliar brand, attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand should be higher for respondents viewing positive news stories than for the control group, due to synergistic effects of multiple communication tools.*

For the same reasons given for synergies of multiple communication tools (advertising and publicity), synergies are also expected for multiple media (radio and print). Hypotheses 2a and 2b predict that pairing a radio ad with a positive print news story should result in more positive attitude toward the ad and brand than pairing a positive print ad with a positive print news story, due to better encoding, and increased affect resulting from improved aesthetics. In other words, use of a different media is expected to interact with news story valence (the positive publicity effect only, because we do not predict a negative publicity effect). Hypotheses 2a and 2b reflect these predictions. It is unknown whether brand familiarity will interact with medium (radio versus print) effects; there are therefore no predicted effects of brand familiarity. Hypothesis 2b does reflect the expected effects of positivity bias on a multiple-media combination of publicity and advertising.

*H2a: There will be a significant interaction between news story valence and medium.*

*H2b: In the positive condition, radio advertising combined with print publicity will result in higher attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand than print advertising combined with print publicity.*

## THE STUDY

An experimental procedure was devised to isolate specific effects of advertising and publicity. Although experiments generally lack external validity, the copy test situation was more “real” than normal, in that it incorporated previous brand attitudes for existing brands, yet allowed for control of the variables in question. As noted earlier, we recognize the trend among consumers toward media multitasking and the more continuous nature of information processing in a cluttered media environment. Nevertheless, we designed this study in an effort to examine the specific interactions of interest while controlling for as many intervening variables as possible. Thus, the experimental sequence of reading a news story, evaluating the story, and sequentially evaluating two ads for different companies, seemed to be the best approach.

Participants were recruited at a northwestern university.

**TABLE I**  
**Reliabilities for Scale Items**

Scale used	No. of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Pretest product category knowledge, credit cards	2	.92
Pretest product category knowledge, vacuum cleaners	2	.93
Pretest attitude toward AMEX	3	.93
Pretest knowledge of AMEX	2	.86
Pretest attitude toward Oreck	3	.87
Pretest knowledge of Oreck	2	.91
Posttest attitude toward the ad	6	.87
Posttest attitude toward the brand	5	.94

Students (224) enrolled in principles of marketing classes participated in the study as part of their course requirements, and 221 usable questionnaires were obtained. The procedure followed three steps. First, each participant completed a pretest that measured the respondents' attitudes toward each brand, their familiarity with each brand, and their knowledge of both product categories. Second, each noncontrol participant read two news stories (one about Oreck and one about AMEX) and then evaluated how positive or negative they thought the stories were (manipulation check). Following Internal Review Board rules, participants were told that the news stories were not real, but they were to act as if they were real. Control group participants did not see any news stories. Third, each participant evaluated two radio ads or two print ads, one for AMEX and one for Oreck. Not only was the order and valence of the news stories balanced, but the order of the brands, media, and control groups were balanced. This was the major advantage of having an experimental design. To limit the measurement of effects of synergy between publicity, media, and advertising, both attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand were measured after the first ad evaluation. The radio advertisements were obtained from a local radio station and were matched with print ads found in magazines. The ad text that appeared in the print ads was modified to duplicate the words used in the radio ads.

### Measurement

Items for the dependent variables and covariates were selected from previous studies as being relevant to the present study. Factor analysis with Varimax rotation of the pretest items showed six clear factors with eigenvalues over 1.00 and loadings over .85 for each variable, including pre-attitudes toward each brand, familiarity with each brand, and product category knowledge for each category. The other loadings were all under .30. Factor analysis for the posttest dependent variables (using the same scale for both brands) showed distinct factors for attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the

brand, as judged by the criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and loadings above .50. The most important factor was attitude toward the ad, six items explaining 46% of the variance. Factor two (five items explaining an additional 15.41% of the variance) is attitude toward the brand. Table 1 gives the number of items and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for each measure.

Categorical variables were used for the independent variables. News story valence included three groups. One group read a positive news story about AMEX and a negative story about Oreck. A second group read a negative story about AMEX and a positive story about Oreck. A third group, the control group, only evaluated advertising; they did not read any stories about either brand. Media was coded as a dichotomous variable, whether a radio or a print ad was evaluated. Both attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand were measured after evaluating each ad, but to eliminate order effects, only the first evaluation was used in the analysis.

### Results

Table 2 presents the results of the manipulation check. The average difference in perceived positivity between those who saw positive and negative articles was significant (Groups 1 and 2 versus Groups 3 and 4,  $t = -11.22, 19.85; p < .01$ ), and the importance values are all above the midpoint (4). Positive Groups 1 and 2 were not significantly different; nor were Groups 3 and 4. In addition, the familiar brand, AMEX, was significantly better known than the unfamiliar brand, Oreck, supporting our manipulation of familiarity. The average difference between the familiarity in brands was 1.92, significant at the  $p = .03$  level. There was a significant difference in pretest attitude toward the brand for Oreck and AMEX ( $t = 2.12$ ), but the difference was relatively small (.24). However, because of its presence, pre-attitude toward the brand was included as a covariate in the analysis.

Table 3 contains descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables. The first column gives the means for each variable in the positive AMEX, negative Oreck (+A,

**TABLE 2**  
**Manipulation Check**

Treatment condition	Cell size	Article is positive		Issue is important	
		AMEX	Oreck	AMEX	Oreck
1. Pos. AMEX/Neg. Oreck	36	5.11	1.86	4.94	5.50
2. Neg. Oreck/Pos. AMEX	36	4.36	1.97	5.22	5.58
3. Neg. AMEX/Pos. Oreck	35	2.06	5.77	5.43	5.14
4. Pos. Oreck/Neg. AMEX	37	1.87	6.16	5.16	5.35
		<i>n</i>		AMEX	Oreck
Average pretest brand familiarity			210	6.37	4.46
Average pre-attitude toward the brand			210	3.84	4.08
Average after attitude toward the brand			209	4.34	4.34

–O) news story condition. The second column gives the means for the negative AMEX, positive Oreck (–A, +O) condition. The last column gives the means for the control (no news story) condition.

There were only small, nonsignificant, negative effects of negative publicity on attitude toward the brand. These findings are generally in line with expected results, which predicted a positivity bias. Positive information was expected to be incorporated into respondents' schemas more than negative information. The effects of positive publicity were larger.

Hypothesis 1a predicts that for a familiar brand, effects of positive publicity will be reduced to nonsignificance by brand familiarity. Hypothesis 1b predicts significant positive effects of positive publicity for a less familiar brand. Hypotheses 2a and 2b predict a moderating effect of media. To test these hypotheses, a MANCOVA (multivariate analysis of covariance) factorial model ( $3 \times 2$ : news story valence  $\times$  media) was used. Because of the high, expected correlation between attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand, the design is inherently multivariate. The small but significant difference in pre-attitude toward the brand and possible effects of product category knowledge were controlled through the use of covariates.

#### *Multivariate Results for AMEX (the Familiar Brand)*

Box's  $M$  was significant, indicating that the covariance matrices differed between groups. In this case, it means the significance level for multivariate effects may be understated. Hair et al. (1998) suggests that a significance level of .03 may be more appropriate in the case of a significant Box's  $M$ . One significant multivariate effect was pre-attitude toward the brand, which indicated that pre-attitude toward the brand played a very important role, at a level of significance ( $p < .01$ ) far below  $p = .05$ . Thus, despite the differing covariance matrices, it is safe to say that the pre-attitude toward the ad

should be used as a covariate. The only other significant between-subjects effect was the interaction between news story valence and media, significant at  $p = .03$ . This interaction is interpreted in discussing H2a. Table 4 presents the between-subjects results for the MANCOVA analysis for both brands.

#### *Multivariate Results for Oreck (the Unfamiliar Brand)*

Box's  $M$  was significant ( $p = .02$ ), indicating that the covariance matrices differed between groups. In this case, the smaller variance for the positive news story valence group for Oreck means the significance levels may be overestimated (too high), and that marginal effects (perhaps  $p = .07$ ; Hair et al. 1998) should be interpreted. In the case of attitude toward the brand for Oreck, all the between-subjects effects were highly significant: pre-attitude toward the brand,  $p < .01$ ; media,  $p = .04$ ; news story valence,  $p < .01$ ; and a marginally significant interaction between media and news story valence,  $p = .07$ . Levene's statistics were nonsignificant. Four between-subjects effects were significant for attitude toward the brand versus only one significant effect for attitude toward the ad for Oreck (Table 4). This combination of effects suggests that depending on the nature of the interactions, we may see some significant differences in paired comparisons from the MANCOVA analysis.

Before considering main effects, the interaction requires interpretation. Although the interaction is disordinal for the negative and control groups, it is ordinal when comparing the positive news story valence group to the other two groups. This means that the main effect of positive news story valence may be interpreted. Hypothesis 1a states that there should be no significant differences between news story valence groups for the familiar brand, AMEX. Although it is weak support in the statistical sense, the results are consistent with H1a: There were no effects of news story valence on attitude toward the ad or attitude toward the brand. For the unfamiliar brand, Oreck, H1b states that advertising following public-



**TABLE 3**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables**

	Condition		
	+A, -O	-A, +O	Control
<b>AMEX</b>			
Mean attitude toward the ad	4.30	4.15	4.54
SD	1.72	1.45	1.45
n	68	70	73
Mean attitude toward the brand	4.34	4.29	4.36
SD	1.22	1.08	1.29
n	70	70	74
Mean pre-attitude toward the brand	3.65	3.97	3.92
SD	1.49	1.30	1.21
n	70	70	72
<b>Oreck</b>			
Mean attitude toward the ad	4.05	4.49	3.72
SD	1.68	1.59	1.54
n	71	70	74
Mean attitude toward the brand	4.07	4.79	4.12
SD	1.34	.88	1.16
n	68	70	72
Mean pre-attitude toward the brand	4.12	4.07	4.05
SD	1.06	.90	.80
n	70	69	72

ity should result in greater attitude toward the ad and the brand in the positive publicity group than in the control group that saw no publicity. For the unfamiliar brand, there were significant differences between news story valence groups. The positive condition resulted in significantly higher attitude toward the ad for Oreck ( $p = .005$ ) and attitude toward the brand for Oreck ( $p < .001$ ), across media types than in the control group. That is, the combined average attitude toward the brand (radio and print) for the positive publicity group was higher than that of the control group. This combination of results is supportive of H1a and H1b.

A similar univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine whether the above news story valence results would be consistent in a low or high brand familiarity condition, but across brands. A dichotomous brand familiarity variable based on a median split was used. For AMEX ( $n = 98$  vs. 101), those with less knowledge included those whose scores totaled seven or lower on a two-item, seven-point, brand familiarity scale. For Oreck ( $n = 104$  vs. 96), those with less knowledge included those who scored two (minimal brand familiarity) on the same scale. The results are supportive. In the high brand familiarity condition, most results were non-significant, as expected. Although the ANOVA was signifi-

cant for attitude toward the brand for AMEX, there were no significant pair-wise differences. All other results were not significant. In the low brand familiarity condition, only attitude toward the ad for Oreck ( $F = 3.409$ ,  $p = .037$ ) and attitude toward the brand for Oreck ( $F = 13.075$ ,  $p < .001$ ) had significant ANOVAs and significant pair-wise differences ( $p = .001$ ,  $p = .047$ , respectively). The reason for these results is probably due to the differences in brand familiarity between brands, even in the low-knowledge condition. A paired samples  $t$  test shows the mean level of brand familiarity for AMEX to be 3.3, compared with 2.0 (minimal or none) for brand familiarity for Oreck in the low brand familiarity condition. The difference is highly significant (paired samples  $t = 6.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding also suggests an interesting threshold effect. Multivariate analysis including brand familiarity as a dichotomous independent variable was also similar and showed multiple and complex interactions between brand familiarity, media, and news story valence.

Hypothesis 2a predicts a significant interaction between media and news story valence. Including the interpretation of the significant Box's  $M$ , H2a appears supported ( $p = .03$ , .07). Hypothesis 2b predicts that in the positive condition, radio is expected to increase attitude toward the ad and attitude

**TABLE 4**  
**p Values of Between-Subject Effects on  $A_{ad}$  and  $A_{br}$**

	$A_{ad}$	$A_{br}$
<i>AMEX independent variables</i>		
Product category knowledge	n.s.	n.s.
Pre-attitude toward the brand	<.01	<.01
Media (print or radio)	n.s.	n.s.
News story valence	n.s.	n.s.
Media $\times$ news story valence	.03	.03
<i>Oreck independent variables</i>		
Product category knowledge	n.s.	n.s.
Pre-attitude toward the brand	n.s.	<.01
Media (print or radio)	n.s.	.04
News story valence	.01	<.01
Media $\times$ news story valence	n.s.	.07

toward the brand over print advertising. Hypothesis 2b is not supported. As noted in Table 4, there are significant interactions between medium and news story valence for both brands. However, the results do not favor radio advertising as expected. There are no significant pair-wise differences between media in the positive news story valence condition for either brand, and differences between media for Oreck are found in the control condition. Figure 1 illustrates the interactions of media with news story valence for the familiar brand, AMEX. The interactions for attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand for AMEX are rather similar. The figure shows that the interaction is disordinal; thus, the interaction should be interpreted in light of both factors, rather than addressing the main effects. The figure shows that for AMEX in the positive condition, the print ad generated more positive attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand, whereas in the negative and control conditions, the radio ad was better than print. Hypothesis 2b is not supported.

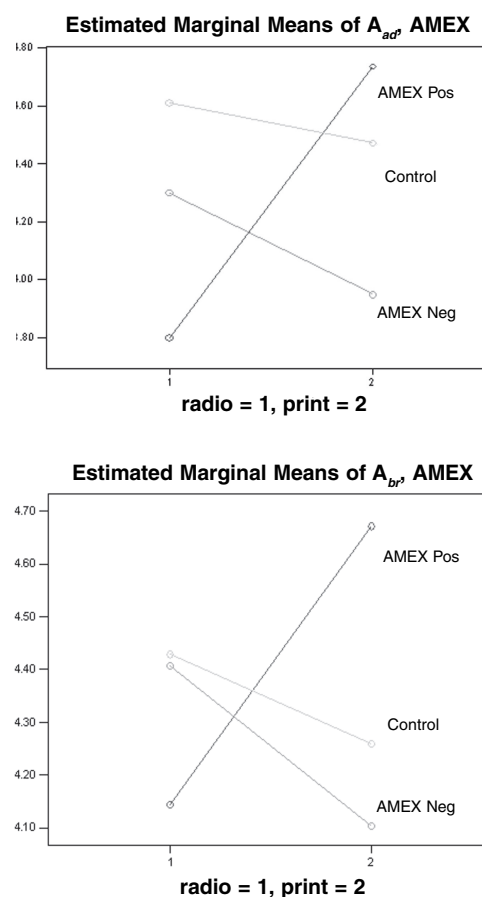
Figure 2 shows the interactions even more clearly. For Oreck, there is no difference between media for the positive news story valence condition or for the negative condition: The difference is in the control group. In the control group, the print ads generated greater attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand.

## DISCUSSION

The results are interesting and somewhat surprising. Three of the four hypotheses are supported. Positive publicity complements advertising in predictable ways, while the effects of negative publicity seem to be mitigated through advertising that creates brand familiarity.

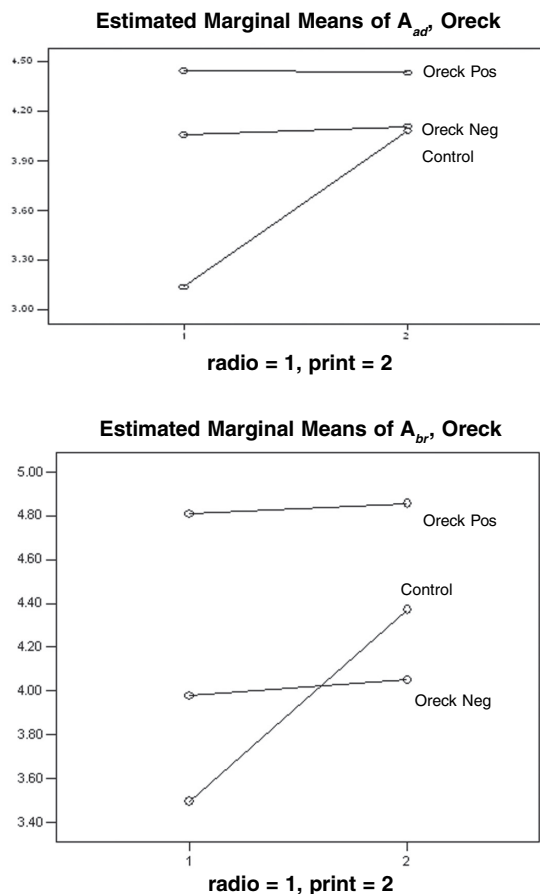
One surprising result is that while there is a significant interaction between media and news story valence, it does not favor radio as expected. For AMEX, radio ads produced

**FIGURE 1**  
**Interactions of Estimated Marginal Means of Attitude Toward the Ad and Attitude Toward the Brand for AMEX**



less affect for the ad or the brand, particularly in the positive condition, where the print ad was marginally ( $p = .07$ ) better liked. Brand familiarity does predict limited effects for advertising, but not why radio would be less preferred or effective.

**FIGURE 2**  
Interactions of Estimated Marginal Means of  
Attitude Toward the Ad and Attitude  
Toward the Brand for Oreck



tive. In the case of Oreck, on the other hand, in the control condition (no news story effects), radio is significantly ( $p = .01$ ) less effective in generating positive attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. One potential explanation is that evaluating ads in the same media as the news stories made it easier for respondents to access from memory the information from the (print) news stories than did evaluating radio ads. In the case of the unfamiliar brand, this memory access was particularly desirable to aid the respondents in their tasks. In fact, if one accepts the fact that radio is not preferred, and examines the print results, the print results reflect the information provided by news stories by more correctly ordering the responses based on news stories. Although not hypothesized, this result seems to merit further study.

Another surprising result is that there are few effects on attitude toward the Oreck ad, and yet there are multiple, significant main effects on attitude toward the Oreck brand. It was expected that there would be differences for the familiar and unfamiliar brand, but the division between main effects

and interactions was unexpected. One potential explanation for this phenomenon is a limitation of the study and relates to the study instructions. Participants were asked to evaluate the ads. Participants were students enrolled in principles of marketing classes. While, by their own report, they had varying familiarity with the two brands, few would have had an advertising class. Results suggest that they felt more comfortable evaluating the ad in the high brand familiarity condition than in the low brand familiarity condition. On the other hand, in the low brand familiarity condition, the effects of positive publicity were stronger (more credible), and were absorbed into attitude toward the brand for Oreck, rather than being included in the requested evaluation (attitude toward the ad).

A second potential explanation is that the traditional advertising response model is simply not the right tool to measure the expected linkages and synergies between IMC tools. The responses to multiple communication tools and media are not simple and linear; instead they are complex and subject to multiple human biases, and traditional advertising research currently has no way of addressing these issues. Both the dependent constructs and the linkages in advertising models may need to be redesigned to be more reflective of the multiple and/or specific objectives of IMC campaigns. More specific dependent measures might improve the model, or a less linear model might better approach the reality of human response (Zaltman 1997). For example, in an IMC campaign, one may have the multiple goals of informing, motivating to action, and postsale relationship maintenance (Duncan 2005). While informing and motivating action may fit well into a linear model, relationship-maintenance cues may inform and motivate, as well as result in the postsale commitment objective. It may be that a more network-like series of dependencies, such as the network-learning model suggested by Zaltman (2003) and others, will better capture the effectiveness of IMC campaigns.

Finally, we believe that we have demonstrated the value of taking the consumer-focused approach to communication research that IMC espouses, one that is concerned with the effects of IMC campaigns, both on consumer cognitions and on the extent to which consumer attitudes and behavior are built on factors other than "facts" in memory or simple responses to stimuli. This approach involves a change in the orientation of advertising and promotion research from one that is based on the messages and outputs from an organization to one that is centered on how consumers process messages and respond to them. This perspective is consistent with the unique benefits of IMC campaign planning and execution, which have been compared with traditional campaign planning efforts (Duncan 1993; Schultz 1993). For example, Schultz (1993) distinguished between traditional "inside-out" planning, which is focused on the company and what it wants to say about its brands, and IMC's "outside-in" planning, which starts

with customers and builds backward to the brand. The importance of this response-based approach to advertising and IMC research has been echoed by Zaltman (1997), Stewart (1996), and others, and is the key to future discoveries and development in this area.

### Managerial Implications

This study provides an experimental examination of multiple communication tools for both familiar and unfamiliar brands. The experiment allows control of some variables while providing external validity by using real-world brands. While there is always a trade-off between internal and external validity, the present study shows that for existing brands, synergies between communication tools (publicity and advertising) may be obtained for a less familiar brand. Therefore, managers of new (less familiar) brands will want to use multiple tools early in the establishment of the brand name. This requires an investment mentality toward IMC, rather than viewing advertising as an expense. In fact, the early growth stage of a new brand in a new product category is an ideal situation for serious IMC investment because the growth stage is an ideal time for investment that pays dividends in terms of market share and repeat purchase. Once a brand is familiar, expenses can be curtailed by reducing the number and types of media and communication tools used to maintain brand familiarity. On the other side of the coin, when faced with negative publicity, companies should remember the importance of brand familiarity in planning their advertising presence. Although it may be necessary to postpone a planned campaign, both public relations expenditures and advertising (importantly, a form of communication under firm control) should be used to tell the firm side of the story. An example is Pepsico's advertising reply to the "syringes found in Pepsi cans" issue some years back. In addition, continued advertising will help maintain the brand familiarity that mitigates effects of negative publicity.

Although there was a significant interaction between news story valence and media, expected synergies of differing media were not found. Rather, it seems that matching the media between publicity and advertising in some way allows better informational access between communication tools. Further research is needed to confirm this result, but its implication is that media (nonverbal) cues can help potential customers access information or attitudes. In other words, if my potential customers are used to getting their information via a multimodal medium such as television, providing multimodal cues on a Web site may be necessary to get maximum result from the site. Conversely, using television advertising to direct potential customers to a largely verbal (printlike) Web site will likely fail to provide the desired synergies (Chang and Thorson 2004).

### Limitations and Future Research

As noted earlier, a number of researchers have begun to give consideration to a more complex, holistic perspective of advertising processing, challenging the more traditional stimulus-response approach used in this study. In addition, trends toward more media multitasking by consumers underscore the importance of the IMC perspective, but they will also require that researchers give more careful consideration to the conditions surrounding the consumption and processing of media in their studies. Despite these limitations, we believe that the current study has revealed several opportunities for future work in these emerging views of advertising response.

This study demonstrates that some of the promised synergies of IMC are achievable, but there are important moderators at work. Brand familiarity (or brand relationships) should be maintained, as this study showed that brand familiarity has protective value against negative publicity, as in the case of the Ford/Firestone debacle. In times of positive publicity, firm-orchestrated or otherwise, firms may be able to achieve greater positive effects from their advertising. Synergistic effects between publicity and advertising were found, but the study failed to find synergies between the use of radio and print media. It is clear that the relationships between media, news story valence, and brand familiarity are quite complex, yet because they are of great interest to advertising practitioners, we encourage future research in this area. For example, further studies regarding both media effects and threshold effects of brand familiarity could be fruitful. It would be useful to know exactly how much brand familiarity is needed for the suppressing effects of negative publicity and how much of what types of advertising best create that brand familiarity.

With regard to the outcomes of mixing media such as radio and print, it has long been accepted that print has information-carrying advantages over more ephemeral media such as radio (Belch and Belch 1998; Duncan 2002). However, more research is needed to determine whether there is some kind of trade-off between the associational value of more ephemeral media to newer generations of consumers and the longevity of print, which has previously been seen as the better informational choice. Even more important, the development of an "IMC Response Model" would be the greatest possible aid to future research in the area. Where the traditional advertising response model has paths for attitudes and cognitions, the IMC response model would likely need additional paths for nonverbal audio and visual associations or for humor or action effects. We believe that as a starting point, a promising area of future research would involve evaluating the extent to which the effects of IMC become beliefs, attitudes, or act directly on behavior, and to what extent IMC alters the consumer's decision-making process itself. In addition, considering the increasing trend toward media multitasking, we



believe that studies investigating the individual difference variable of polychronicity and its role in consumer response to these environments are also likely to yield valuable results (Bluedorn, Felker-Kaufman, and Lane 1992; Bluedorn et al. 1999; Gentry, Ko, and Stolman 1990; Lindquist and Kaufman-Scarborough 2004).

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